

ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS' ASSOCIATION

**SUBMISSION TO THE
NORTHERN EDUCATION PROJECT**

November, 1991

The ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS' ASSOCIATION
represents 94 public boards of education of all sizes and
from all regions of the province which serve over
1,700,000 students and adult learners.

OPSBA speaks for public education in Ontario and
represents the interests of public school trustees to the
government, the public and the media.

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INTRODUCTION

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association represents 94 public boards of education of all sizes and from all regions of the province. Forty-one of these public school boards are located within Northern Ontario.

We are pleased to submit a brief to the Northern Education Project and welcome the opportunity to participate in the examination of educational services for small and isolate boards in Northern Ontario.

OPSBA will not be making recommendations on specific implementation models for the provision of educational services in Northern Ontario. That task is better left up to individual boards in the region. Instead, we will highlight general concerns with both the mandate of the project and the service areas under examination.

GENERAL CONCERNS

Mandate

The mandate of the Northern Education Project is twofold:

- To undertake an in-depth study of a variety of methods of providing educational services to meet the needs of small and isolate boards in Northern Ontario; and
- To submit a report with options and recommendations to Management Committee of the Ministry of Education.

The "educational services" that will be studied include curriculum support services including teacher inservice; financial and capital services; supervisory services; and, the funding of these services.

OPSBA has concerns with the rather restricted mandate of the Northern Education Project and its guiding principles. Not only is the definition of "educational services" too narrow, but study areas included in an earlier mandate of the project have been eliminated.

"Educational services" must be broadened to include an examination of various models of providing and coordinating social services programs such as speech pathology, social work and psychology services. Special education service requirements must be given careful examination.

Curriculum support services must include not only teacher inservice but trustee inservice. In small, northern boards, trustees take on many administrative and negotiating functions and it is imperative that they have access to adequate inservice opportunities. Professional development of trustees is critical to school board effectiveness.

Specifically, boundary issues are not to be examined comprehensively. Rather they will be considered by the regional offices. It has been also indicated that due to the current discussions around governance between the federal and provincial governments, native issues will not be included. The development of a common approach to isolate board funding has been deleted from the mandate. OPSBA does not support the exclusion of these areas from the mandate of the Northern Education Project. It is therefore recommended that

- [1] the current mandate of the Northern Education Project be expanded to include school board boundary issues, native education concerns and isolate board funding.

Guiding Principles

There are five principles which guide the Project:

- New methods of service delivery to meet program and supervisory needs and to facilitate sharing of existing resources will be developed in consultation with school boards and other educators;
- School boards will be involved in a consultation process which respects the existing governance structure, maximizes resources and enhances both accessibility to services and local ownership of these services;
- Linguistic and religious rights, and cultural interests must be recognized and respected within the framework of current legislation in Ontario;
- New methods of program and supervisory service delivery may cross existing geographic boundaries; and,
- In accordance with legislative and program requirements, and following consultation, isolate school boards will be in a position to assume responsibility for their own supervisory services. A variety of arrangements for supervision will be considered.

OPSBA supports the principles which encourage cost effectiveness and efficiency; the sharing of resources; cooperative planning among boards; and, a feeling of ownership by boards of any solution.

Concerns have been expressed, however, that there is an expectation on the part of the Ministry that large boards will be the source of services for small and isolate northern boards. In many cases, this is not possible due to the geographic distances involved. It also assumes that the large boards have adequate resources to provide these services. It must be stressed that although cooperation and sharing among school boards is to be encouraged, mandatory cooperation dictated "from above" will not work. A variety of models and solutions developed at the local level must be encouraged.

Some of the guiding principles surrounding the project limit the options that could be considered in the delivery of educational services to Northern Ontario. For example, the need to respect current governance structures, linguistic and religious rights will limit the possibility of alternative structures which could provide for the coordination of services by school boards.

One possibility which should be given serious consideration when developing models of service delivery is confederated school boards. At its Annual General Meeting held in Thunder Bay, 1991 OPSBA supported the following resolution:

That OPSBA petition the Minister of Education to amend the Education Act in a manner designed to incorporate in the Act, the requisite discretionary authority to enable the concept of a confederated school board to be realized where coterminous public and separate school boards see fit to implement it by mutual consent.

Policy Decisions

The types of service models that can be developed by the Northern Education Project have been restricted by policy decisions that have already been made by the Ministry of Education. We would argue that many of the problems currently experienced by northern boards in providing curriculum and supervisory support services directly result from the withdrawal from the provision of direct services by the Ministry of Education Regional Offices.

The policy decision with regard to the withdrawal of direct services was made prior to any assessment of the needs of northern boards, and before viable alternative services were put in place. Even more significantly, boards were given responsibility

for these areas without any recognized increase in funding for their provision and without proper assistance in working out viable options for supervisory services.

As a result, the Northern Education Project is in the process of studying a problem and contemplating solutions after the fact. It is examining options after policy decisions have already been made. OPSBA would argue that there is the need for clarification of the role of regional offices in the provision of direct curriculum and supervisory services. As a result, it is recommended that

- [2] the Ministry of Education undertake a comprehensive analysis of the role of regional offices in the provision of direct services to northern school boards; and that
- [3] the direct provision of services by the Ministry of Education Regional Offices remain an option for northern Ontario school boards and should not be excluded from the models being examined by the Northern Education Project.

Representation

In order to ensure adequate consultation with northern school boards and to provide assistance to the development of the project, there is the need for broad representation of interested parties on the Northern Education Project itself. OPSBA recommends that

- [4] A Northern Education Project Advisory Committee be established with direct representation from all interested parties including isolate school boards.

Coordination

One of the major OPSBA concerns with regard to the Northern Education Project centres on the need to coordinate all Ministry initiated projects/studies that could likely affect northern Ontario school boards.

In addition to the Northern Education Project, current studies related to northern Ontario school boards include the tripartite intergovernmental study regarding native programs and services; jurisdictional boundaries studies; a review of program councils east/west; and the Umfreville project review.

Provincial studies which are not restricted to, but will have impact on, the nature and funding of northern education include: the advisory committee on French

language education governance; the restructuring initiatives; teacher education council of Ontario studies; the Fair Task Commission; the report of the Advisory Committee on Children's Services; and the Discussion Paper on Integration.

Some, if not all of these projects, reports and/or studies overlap in terms of focus or mandates and directly impact on northern boards both from short term and long term perspectives.

OPSBA recognizes the need to limit the scope of studies to manageable proportions; this does not preclude the need, however, to coordinate activities.

As a result, and with these concerns in mind, OPSBA has requested that, in order to facilitate the overall coordination and communication of various projects/studies presently underway in Northern Ontario, and to ensure that boards, as major stakeholders, have relevant information and input regarding these projects:

- [5] the Ministry of Education establish a projects/studies coordinating committee with representation of Northern Ontario boards affected by such projects/studies.

It has also been requested that the general mandate of the committee be to facilitate the overall coordination, implementation, operations and communication pertaining to various Ministry of Education initiated projects and studies which will likely have direct impact on northern school boards. The committee would:

- assist in ensuring that relevant stakeholders are aware of developments relative to these projects/studies as may be appropriate;
- assist in the coordination of these studies/projects;
- act in an advisory capacity to the Ministry of Education and various projects/studies personnel; and
- receive, for consultation only, final draft recommendations relative to project outcomes, as may be appropriate.

OPSBA is encouraged that the Minister of Education, in a letter to OPSBA dated August 14, 1991, has recognized that our recommendation "to facilitate the overall coordination and communication of a number of studies currently affecting northern Ontario school boards is worthy of consideration" and that the Acting Director for

Regional Services is placing this issue on "a future agenda of the Regional Services Division for careful examination".

OPSBA will continue to pursue the importance of this issue with the Ministry of Education.

In addition to the existence of a number of studies with overlapping mandates, the elimination of significant issues from the mandate of the Northern Education Project, the restrictive nature of the guiding principles and the narrow definition of "educational services" all highlight the need for the coordination of this project with other existing studies.

Timelines

With regard to timelines, there are concerns that with the report of the Northern Education Project not due until December 1992, many of the major decisions related to education in the north will have already been made. The timelines are not compatible with the Fair Tax Commission study and other studies such as French language governance.

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

The delivery of education in Northern Ontario has many aspects in common with all school boards, whether they be large or small, rural or urban. But they also have aspects which are unique. Both must be kept in mind when developing models for the delivery of educational services.

Regardless of their size or geographic location, school boards must, in order to provide equality of educational opportunity and outcomes, provide programs that not only ensure competency in core curricular areas but must also be flexible, responsive and adaptable to the specific needs and abilities of the learner.

In addition to providing programs that meet provincially-mandated curriculum requirements, courses of study must also be flexible and responsive to local community concerns and expectations.

School boards are also major employers and, as such, are necessarily affected by all workplace legislation. Because so much of the investment in education is people, the costs of provincial legislation such as pay equity, health and safety and the employer health tax are very substantial both financially and in terms of staff resources.

All of these responsibilities require resources, both financial and human, and must be delivered within the current climate of fiscal restraint. These resources are in short supply in rural, isolated and northern school boards.

Northern school boards have additional features which provide for even more difficult challenges in meeting their responsibilities. These include the serious economic difficulties experienced by many school boards due to the decline in resource-based industries and the geographic distances between and within school board jurisdictions.

In addition to keeping in mind the economic circumstances and geographic distances involved for northern school boards, OPSBA recommends that

- [6] the following criteria be utilized in assessing the various models for the delivery of education services:

- does the model emphasize local initiative in finding workable solutions that are developed from below as opposed to dictated from above; and
- does the model support the principles of flexibility and autonomy? No one solution is appropriate for all school boards. There must be flexibility so that individual boards can develop and implement programs which best meet their community needs.

OPSBA will now briefly comment on the specific services areas under examination by the Northern Education Project.

Curriculum Support Services

Responsibility for the development of curriculum and program is shared by the Ministry of Education which develops broad provincial curriculum policies, goals and guidelines; and school boards, which develop local programs that reflect ministry policies and local priorities.

The role of the ministry of education in the development of curriculum policy and resource materials is currently under review as part of the "restructuring initiatives" dealing with all facets of elementary and secondary education. Any recommendations from the Northern Education Project with regard to the role northern school boards in the development and sharing of curriculum resource materials must take into consideration proposals for change from the "restructuring initiatives" workteams.

Small, isolated northern boards do not have the resources (financial or human) to do extensive program development and if provincial grants continue to decline it may become necessary for the provincial government to produce even more policy guidelines and additional resource documents.

OPSBA recognizes that there is the need for the coordination of curriculum and teacher inservice support services for northern school boards. One model of cooperative curriculum development which has been very successful for boards in northwestern Ontario is Program Councils East and West.

Program Council East and West

The Councils have proven to be very effective in terms of delivering direct service to individual boards relative to program development and implementation and teacher inservice at the secondary level.

However, the current provision of Ministry of Education incentive grants on an annual basis is not conducive to long term planning. OPSBA reiterates its support for the Program Councils and urges the government to give a more substantial financial commitment to the Councils.

OPSBA also recommends that

- [7] the Northern Education Project undertake a careful examination of the feasibility of expanding the Program Councils both in terms of the number of boards involved in the program and the service areas included within their scope.

Given the need for curriculum development across all levels of education, the current limitation of the Program Councils to secondary education is inappropriately restrictive. The range of services should, at a minimum, be expanded to include Grades 7 and 8 curriculum. This expansion would be in keeping with the Ministry of Education Intermediate Division policy outlined in the OSIS and the government restructuring initiatives. The long term responsibilities of the Councils should be expanded to include curriculum services from JK to OAC.

The Program Councils are just one example of how northern boards can work cooperatively to meet curriculum and teacher in-service needs. Additional activities that should receive serious consideration include:

- the development of provincial generic models of policies, procedures and initiatives for school boards;
- the examination of various alternatives which will allow for the sharing of high quality second generation curriculum documents already in existence;
- the possibility of a curriculum clearing house needs to be given serious consideration;
- the development of incentives (both financial and human) for boards to pool their curriculum resources; and,
- the provision, by the Ministry of Education Regional Offices, of curriculum and teacher inservice resource personnel.

Teacher Inservice

We cannot discuss curriculum support services without emphasizing the need for adequate teacher inservice. New programs and curriculum cannot be implemented without the cooperation, support and acquisition of new knowledge and skills by teachers in the classroom.

One of the concerns expressed by northern school boards has been the lack of ongoing, teacher inservice. Too often teachers are provided with a one day workshop on a new program and there is no follow-up to assess whether there are difficulties with the implementation of the program and/or alterations that have to be made.

Regional and local inservice should continue to encourage the sharing of expertise.

The Ministry of Education Regional Offices should continue to provide assistance to small and isolate boards for teacher inservice.

Trustee Inservice

It must be recognized by the Ministry of Education that, in addition to teacher inservice, there is the need in many small and isolate boards in Northern Ontario for trustee inservice.

Too often, in times of financial restraint, professional development programs to assist trustees are the first items to be cut from the budget. There must be guarantees that designated funding is provided for trustee professional development

opportunities. Provincial associations provide excellent programs but the cost of attendance is often prohibitive to small northern boards.

Supervisory Services

Decisions have already been made for the Ministry of Education to withdraw from the provision of supervisory services and to transfer this responsibility to individual school boards. However, except for the provision of funds for supervisory services as provided through the cooperative services model in northwestern Ontario; there has not been the promise of any additional funds to cover the cost of the transferral of these services.

In a letter to the Directors of Education and Chairpersons of Boards dated July 17, 1989, the Deputy Minister of Education announced proposed initiatives by the Ministry of Education regarding the provision of supervisory services for school boards. In "support of local autonomy and local accountability", the Ministry of Education was withdrawing its current supervisory services and transferring supervisory responsibility over to individual school boards. The effective date for the establishment of local supervision by school boards was September 1, 1990.

OPSBA reiterates its recommendation that the possibility of continued Ministry support for supervisory services be closely examined. In some areas, due to the geographic distances involved, the sharing of supervisory officers is impractical and unworkable.

We recognize that there are many advantages to school boards to either have their own or to share supervisory officers. Board selected supervisory officers gives ownership and responsibility to the Boards; board selected supervisory officers work for the Boards and not the Ministry.

But recognition of the need for local autonomy and responsibility cannot occur without adequate provincial funding for these services. There must be sufficient provincial financial support as required to underwrite the cost of the Ministry divested supervisory services including travel and support services. The possibility of funding supervisory services for small boards or sections as a budget approval item and not as a ceiling item should be examined.

No one model for supervisory officer services will fit the needs of all northern boards. A variety of options should exist for the provision of supervisory officer services. These options could include:

- direct board provision of supervisory officer services;
- board sharing of supervisory officer services;
- the purchase of supervisory officer services on a need basis from a large board;
- the provision of supervisory officer services from the Ministry of Education Regional offices; and/or,
- the development of collaborative regional consortia of school boards for the provision of a variety of services including supervisory, curriculum and inservice requirements (A possible variation of the Umfreville model discussed below).

Special Education Services

Any discussion of the provision of services for northern education must, of necessity, deal with questions related to the provision of services for special education students.

OPSBA has previously stated that the primary functions of the public school system are teaching and learning; developing within young people the knowledge, skills and attitudes that lead to a successful transition to adulthood. However, there is no longer any doubt about the correlation between family characteristics and school success or between the occurrence of social, emotional and behavioral problems and academic achievements.

Policies and programs directed at prevention and early intervention must become a priority.

Schools have assumed an ever expanding responsibility to respond to the needs of all children. But the capacity of schools to provide the services that would be helpful to children at risk for social, emotional or behavioral problems is sorely limited. We have neither the formal mandate nor the resources. As other sectors find their budgets curtailed or face the need to reallocate resources, it is often preventive or early intervention services that are cut or transferred to the school.

Further development of programs to meet the needs of children at risk requires a careful examination of governance, management, and funding so that service delivery is effective, coordinated, flexible and responsive. The school system must be a key

partner in the development of new service delivery models. OPSBA recommends that

- [8] The mandates of Education, Community and Social Services and Health, as they relate to children's mental health, must be more clearly defined at the policy level.

This review must include the definition and requirement for collaboration and integration of services at the community level. To be truly preventive, we suggest that new strategies must be comprehensive. Program funding should be directed to collaborative and integrative service models because they are more likely to be both cost effective and more efficacious. It is necessary to take steps to further break down the territorial behaviour that has limited the development of collaborative programs in the past.

There is the need for coordination of such services as speech pathology and psychological assistance among the various agencies in a region. Such policy decisions must be supported by implementation plans which ensure that the policy objectives are shared and understood by all whose cooperation is essential to success. For example, the "integrated services for northern children" (ISNC) was developed at the level of the provincial ministries with little effort directed to local level cooperation and coordination. As a result, conflict over turf seems more common than coordination for children.

OPSBA recommends that

- [9] a comprehensive review of the Integrated Services for Northern Children (ISNC) be undertaken to ensure that the goals are being met and that adequate resources have been assigned to this initiative.

The lack of education specialists in Northern Ontario is a well documented problem. There is the need for the Ministry of Education to sponsor a Northern Bursaries program which would provide funds for the hiring of specialists to support special education programs in schools.

The need for coordination with other studies must, once again, be highlighted. It is the intent of the Ministry of Education to release, in the near future, a discussion paper on the integration of exceptional pupils. The timelines are such that the policy decisions which will affect northern boards and small boards in particular will be decided prior to the release of the Northern Education Project.

Financial and Capital Services

OPSBA argues that questions of funding for "educational services" including financial and capital services for northern Ontario cannot be addressed outside of the current review of education funding taking place through the Fair Tax Commission and the expected process of the Ministry of Education to reform education finance.

We believe that the Northern Education Project should be in a position to provide substantial and meaningful advice to these provincial processes.

OPSBA will limit itself to making a number of comments on circumstances and issues unique to northern Ontario that must be kept in mind while the review of the funding of education in general is taking place.

Any examination of the delivery of educational services must be predicated on the objective of equality of educational opportunity for citizens of all ages regardless of geographic location.

Only the provincial government can ensure that there is equal access to a clearly defined level of education regardless of the wealth of the community. To achieve true equality of educational opportunity, funding must reflect the specific differences attributable to geography, size and wealth of the community.

It is difficult to meet provincial program requirements, Education Act requirements, and various government initiatives within the financial limitations for the operation of small school boards. The costs associated with the operation of a small school board with a small student population are not met by the current grant structure.

There must be guarantees of the provision of adequate long term financial resources for the services. Short-term, start up funding is not the answer.

Adult Education

Given the current economic climate and the decline of resource based industries, adult education has become a major component of the provision of education in northern boards. In this context, OPSBA would reiterate its recommendations contained in the OPSBA Position Paper on Adult Education which recognize adult education as a legitimate component of education in this province; ensure its funding; and provide for coordination and cooperation in the provision of adult continuing education programs at the local, provincial and federal levels.

- [10] The province develop a comprehensive policy for adult education which includes the right of adults to receive, from school boards, services that are designed to meet their educational needs. In order to provide for clarification of relative mandates, policy discussions must cross inter-Ministerial boundaries.
- [11] That the government, through a broad-based consultation process, develop a comprehensive model of education finance which recognizes adult continuing education as a legitimate component of education in this province.

Isolate Boards

Much of what we have said of the problems of education in the north applies with even greater intensity for isolate boards.

One of the "guiding principles" of the Northern Education project is that "in accordance with legislative and program requirements, and following consultation, isolate school boards will be in a position to assume responsibility for their own supervisory services".

The isolate boards in northwestern Ontario already have in place a model for the provision of supervisory officer services. The Cooperative Services Unit (Umfreville District School Area Board) has proven to be very effective in providing services, on a board purchase basis, for isolate boards in the region. The trustee advisory committee is currently examining the possibility of setting up a two-tier board in northwestern Ontario to replace Umfreville.

OPSBA recommends that

- [12] the Ministry of Education and Isolate Boards continue to support the cooperative services unit or Umfreville DSA Board for the delivery and management of curriculum and inservice needs of isolate boards and their teachers.

Isolate boards in the other regions of northern Ontario do not have such a model. The possibility of expanding the Umfreville model to include small as well as other isolate boards should be examined.

The discontinuation of the direct provision of supervisory officer services for these isolate boards must not occur until adequate funding and support mechanisms are

put in place. It must also not occur until a common approach to the funding of isolate boards is developed.

Common Approach to Isolate Board Funding

Part of the original mandate of the Northern Education Project was the development of a "common approach to isolate board funding". OPSBA would argue that no study of northern education can be complete without this analysis.

The current provincial funding mechanism for isolate boards is based on program driven funding in which the Ministry of Education Regional Office must approve all budget components, generally in a "line by line" fashion, of the board's submission according to the Isolate Board funding parameters of the Ministry.

There are inconsistencies in both the provision of services for isolate boards and in their funding levels depending on the regional location of the isolate boards.

When examining a "common approach to isolate board funding", the effect of this funding on small boards in the region must also be kept in mind. For example, the Atikokan Board of Education has recommended that the mandate of the Northern Education Project be expanded to give consideration to the funding of small school boards in isolate board jurisdictions and the equities or inequities that could exist between non-isolate versus isolate board funding in co-terminus and or contiguous boards where one board may be funded under the Umfreville Model.

Identified concerns of isolate boards which need to be addressed by the Northern Education Project include the need for trustee professional development and inequities in transportation grants for students.

Trustee Inservice

As we noted earlier, professional development for trustees is critical to school board effectiveness. There is insufficient funding for trustees' professional development in small school isolate boards. It is recommended that as opposed to being part of the general funds for Isolate Boards, that there be specific funds identified for professional development within the Ministry of Education funding provisions for isolate boards which includes funds for membership in provincial associations.

Transportation Grants

A number of isolate boards have expressed concerns about the cost to parents, emotionally and financially who have to send their children away from home to continue their secondary education.

Under the Education Act, Section 166(7,8,9), "the board of the school division or secondary school district of which he is a resident pupil may reimburse the parent or guardian at the end of each month for the cost of providing for such pupil, board, lodging, and transportation once a week from his residence to school and return, in an amount set by the board for each day of attendance..."

The cost of return transportation home from school locations for Northwestern Ontario territorial students ranges from \$30.68 to \$1,053.28 (Appendix B). The current Ministry approval amount for "board, lodging and transportation" is \$358.60 per month. For most northwestern Ontario students, all of this amount is used for board and lodging and nothing is left for transportation. Quite clearly, any standard allowance for board, lodging and "weekly transportation" home is unfair to students from remote locations. In contrast, it should be noted that northwestern Ontario students who are admitted to provincial schools do get weekly transportation home. It is recommended that

- [13] the Northern Education Project examine the question of transportation costs for territorial students to ensure that the amounts are adequate to provide for transportation home for these students as well as board and lodging.

Secondary School Education

The lack of secondary schools or viable program alternatives is a real problem for isolate boards in northern Ontario. Currently, in order to receive secondary school education, students have to leave their home community to attend school in other jurisdictions. A few schools offer a limited selection of courses for Grades 9 and 10, but most students must leave home right out of Grade 8.

These students experience a number of difficulties. Adapting to living away from home, finding a suitable boarding home, and adjusting to a new school and community are just a few. As a result, they have a very high dropout rate. The Ministry of Education should undertake a study of the problems they experience and of ways to help solve them.

In addition, the isolate boards in the north indicate a need for various alternatives for these students and request that the Ministry of Education examine, in consultation with them, the whole matter of secondary school education in their communities.

A variety of options for the provision of these programs should be considered including, at a minimum, the following:

- the establishment of isolate secondary school boards;
- the establishment of boards of education which would provide both elementary and secondary education;
- the establishment of territorial and/or regional isolate secondary school boards;
- the establishment of a Ministry of Education distance education register which would enable students to take distance education credit courses from another board and generate a high cost factor for boards delivering these credits.

Regardless of the alternative chosen, the provision of programs through distance education will be a major component of secondary education for isolate students. In this regard, in addition to the need for equipment, there is the need for the Ministry of Education to coordinate a provincial approach to the development of consistently high quality distance education programs. There is currently no such uniformity in quality. As well, the Ministry should be looking at more innovative usage of technology in education and should be taking a leadership role in developing programs to try out such innovations.

Adult Education

The lack of secondary school programs in isolate communities has serious consequences for the provision of adult education in the north. The depressed economy in all areas has prompted many individuals to consider a return to school in order to prepare themselves for the demands of their job and for obtaining new jobs in a very competitive market place.

The provision of necessary secondary school credit courses for adult learners is not possible, however, for a number of reasons. No funding is available to isolate (elementary) boards for their purchase from larger boards through Contact North. No equipment is available to a community unless it is designated as a Contact North site; no such designation is available unless the community school offers secondary courses. Are we not describing a "catch 22" dilemma?

Given that Contact North has the mandate to provide access to education for people across the north, it is only reasonable to expect that residents of isolate communities be provided with such access.

In order to reduce the disparity in educational opportunities for students in remote areas as compared with large urban areas, we request that the Ministry of Education amend current requirements for designation as a Contact North Community Access site so as to enable such designation for elementary boards. We also request that funding be provided to cover course fees for adult students. This would allow boards to enter into agreements with other schools and boards on the Contact north network and thus provide appropriate education for adult residents of remote communities.

CONCLUSION

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association has been pleased to make a submission to the Northern Education Project on behalf of our member boards in the northern region.

Although we welcome the current examination of northern education, we believe that the rather restrictive nature of its mandate and guiding principles as well as decisions to exclude certain areas from study have unnecessarily limited the possibilities for recommendations which would have had a significant impact on the way in which education is delivered and funded in the north.

As a result of these decisions, coordination and integration with other Ministry initiated studies that could likely affect northern Ontario school boards is essential.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- [1] the current mandate of the Northern Education Project be expanded to include school board boundary issues, native education concerns and isolate board funding.
- [2] the Ministry of Education undertake a comprehensive analysis of the role of regional offices in the provision of direct services to northern school boards; and that
- [3] the direct provision of services by the Ministry of Education Regional Offices remain an option for northern Ontario school boards and should not be excluded from the models being examined by the Northern Education Project.

- [4] a Northern Education Project Advisory Committee be established with direct representation from all interested parties including isolate school boards.
- [5] the Ministry of Education establish a projects/studies coordinating committee with representation of Northern Ontario boards affected by such projects/studies.
- [6] the following criteria be utilized in assessing the various models for the delivery of education services:
 - does the model emphasize local initiative in finding workable solutions that are developed from below as opposed to dictated from above; and
 - does the model support the principles of flexibility and autonomy? No one solution is appropriate for all school boards. There must be flexibility so that individual boards can develop and implement programs which best meet their community needs.
- [7] the Northern Education Project undertake a careful examination of the feasibility of expanding the Program Councils both in terms of the number of boards involved in the program and the service areas included within their scope.
- [8] the mandates of Education, Community and Social Services and Health, as they relate to children's mental health, must be more clearly defined at the policy level.
- [9] a comprehensive review of the Integrated Services for Northern Children (ISNC) be undertaken to ensure that the goals are being met and that adequate resources have been assigned to this initiative.
- [10] The province develop a comprehensive policy for adult education which includes the right of adults to receive, from school boards, services that are designed to meet their educational needs. In order to provide for clarification of relative mandates, policy discussions must cross inter-Ministerial boundaries.

- [11] That the government, through a broad-based consultation process, develop a comprehensive model of education finance which recognizes adult continuing education as a legitimate component of education in this province.
- [12] the Ministry of Education and Isolate Boards continue to support the cooperative services unit or Umfreville DSA Board for the delivery and management of curriculum and inservice needs of isolate boards and their teachers.
- [13] the Northern Education Project examine the question of transportation costs for territorial students to ensure that the amounts are adequate to provide for transportation home for these students as well as board and lodging.

Appendix A

Umfreville Model

History

In 1976 supervisory officers in the Northwestern Ontario Regional Office of the Ministry of Education asked the Regional Director of Education to establish a Cooperative Services Unit which would assist isolate school boards in their business and accounting functions. In agreeing to their request, it was decided to organize the unit as a component of the Umfreville D.S.A. Board, an isolate board whose one school had been previously closed. By board resolution, the Cooperative Services Unit was established and began operations on January 1, 1977.

Since that time additional needs have been identified, and the C.S.U. has been gradually expanded. The services provided at present are as follows:

- Business and Accounting
- Territorial Students Program
- Educational Consultants Program
- Professional Development Program
- Supervisory Officer Program
- Capital Officer Program

Details concerning these programs are given below. It should be pointed out that not all isolate boards use all of the services. The trustees decide on which services will be used and to what extent they will be used.

Funding

The Umfreville D.S.A. budget is prepared according to regional office guidelines and submitted to the Regional Director for revision and approval (in the same way as all other isolate boards). A proration is then made which allocates a percentage of the approved budget to the other regional isolate boards on the basis of their expected use of C.S.U. services. The budget of each board is then increased by an amount equal to its proration so that it can pay for services received as the year progresses. Board decisions concerning C.S.U. services are made annually and confirmed by contract between the client board and the Umfreville D.S.A. Board.

Structure and Staffing

In the spring of 1988 an external review of the C.S.U. was conducted. The review resulted in 55 recommendations covering such topics as: provision of professional services; provision of supervisory services; territorial student program; organizational structure and funding; and business services.

Both short term and long term restructuring proposals were examined. The short term restructuring was approved as a two year pilot project and provided for

- the appointment of a full time Director
- the establishment of an advisory council with isolate boards being invited to appoint one trustee

The mandate of the pilot project has been extended until the results of the Northern Education Project are available.

Appendix B
Cost of Return Transportation Home from School Location for
Northwestern Ontario Territorial Students

Collins D.S.A. Board

•Thunder Bay to Collins (bus and train)	\$ 72.00
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Connell & Ponsford D.S.A. Board

•Thunder Bay to Pickle Lake (air)	\$ 428.00
•Wingham to Pickle Lake (air)	
Metrage or bus for Wingham to Toronto not included	\$ 632.00
•Fort Frances to Pickle Lake (air)	\$ 348.82
•Manitouwadge to Pickle Lake (air)	\$ 783.24
•London to Pickle Lake (air)	\$1,053.28
•Schumacher to Picke Lake (air - from Timmins)	\$ 598.46

Northern District School Area Board

•Thunder Bay to Armstrong (bus)	\$ 58.00
•Sioux Lookout to Armstrong (train)	\$ 44.00
•Thunder Bay to Ferland (bus and train)	\$ 72.00
•Atikokan to Savant Lake (car-metragage charge)	\$ 258.12
•Thunder Bay to Allanwater (bus and train)	\$ 79.00
•Thunder Bay to Savant Lake (bus and car)	\$ 181.60
•Ignace to Savant Lake (car)	\$ 129.60

Slate Falls D.S.A. Board

•Thunder Bay to Slate Falls	\$ 518.30
(scheduled air and air charter assuming four students	
-one quarter charter rate used for one)	
•Sioux Lookout to Slate Falls (one quarter of charter)	\$ 77.25

Summer Beaver D.S.A. Board

Thunder Bay to Summer Beaver (air)	\$ 622.00
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Upsala D.S.A. Board

•Thunder Bay to Upsala (bus)	\$ 30.68
•Fort Frances to Upsala (bus)	\$ 102.68